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ABSTRACT

This summary report describes Maine's early childhood demonstration sites--three model programs within the schools which serve as demonstration and training sites for public school and preschool educators and which increase access to quality programs for four-year-old children and their families. Demonstration sites were designed to provide an individualized, child-centered curriculum, regional training opportunities for early childhood educators, and parental education programs. The first section of the report provides background information, providing national and state contexts as well as brief descriptions of Head Start and other child development services in Maine. The next section describes the demonstration sites project in detail, including site selection, training of site personnel, and community resource teams. An evaluation study is presented in the third section, and the findings of that study are outlined in the fourth section of the report. The report concludes with a discussion of the implications for other state efforts in early childhood education. (MM)

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Opening Doors

Maine's Early Childhood Demonstration Sites

Betsy Squibb, Ph.D.

May 1993

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Augusta, Maine

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Executive Summary

As the nation has focussed on the importance of education for its citizens, it has become increasingly clear that the early years of schooling are critical. Strong early childhood education programs are essential to meet the educational goals set by the state governors and the president of the United States. Many states have experimented with programs that link preschool to later schooling. Maine was among the first which ventured into the arena of publicly funded preschools for four year old children.

Maine established three demonstration sites in 1989 with the dual purpose of: (1) demonstrating high quality programs for underserved four-year-olds and their families; and, (2) providing training in developmentally appropriate early childhood practices for both preschool and public school educators. In the summary report, the findings of the first years of the demonstration sites are presented.

Outcomes of the Maine experience indicated that the preschools provided quality educational experiences for children and their families, regional training opportunities for numerous preschool and public school educators and parental opportunities for involvement. More specifically, the environments of the demonstration sites were found to be of high quality by a widely used rating scale in the field of early childhood education.

There were ample examples of children engaged in developmentally appropriate work. Teachers were actively engaged with the children's learning, challenging their thinking and supporting the development of the skills and attitudes necessary for later schooling. Parent involvement included parents in the classroom, home visits, regular parent meetings and newsletters home. Parents reported that the children were ready for school as a result of the preschool experience. Educators in community preschools and grades K-3 participated together in training and awareness activities in the demonstration sites.

Implications of the Early Childhood Demonstration Sites include: a systemic approach to providing access with equity to preschool for the community with emphasis on the underserved; creating a "seamless" transition for children from preschool to the K-3 grades; and the beginning of an early childhood unit, including community preschool educators with educators in the public school grades K-3.

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For more information, please contact:

Jenifer Van Deusen, Coordinator
Early Childhood Demonstration Sites
Department of Education
State House Station #23
Augusta, ME 04333-0023
phone: 207.287-5917
fax: 207.287-5900

Introduction

As the nation has focussed on the importance of education for its citizens, it has become increasingly clear that the early years of schooling are critical. Strong early childhood programs are essential to meet the educational goals set by the state governors and the president. Many states have experimented with programs that link preschool to later schooling. Maine is among those who (early on) ventured into the arena of publicly funded demonstration programs for four-year-olds. The following is a summary report of Maine's demonstration early childhood education sites in their first three years.

Background

The National Backdrop

Since 1985 the increase of state-initiated preschools has brought attention to the role of public schools in early childhood education. According to the Public School Early Childhood Study (Marx and Seligson, 1988) state-funded prekindergartens or preschools grew from 10 in 1984 to 28 in 1988. These programs were mainly part-day programs for at-risk 4-year-olds.

The preschool initiatives were part of a series of broader state and federal efforts to address concerns of education reform in the public schools as well as intervention strategies for at-risk children. It is difficult to say whether state interest in preschool was a result of any one trend; rather, it appears to be a response to several forces concerning preschool children and their families that converged in the eighties.

The first of these forces that has pressured states to engage in preschools is national and statewide concern with education reform. In considering reform at the secondary and elementary level, the importance of early childhood education came to the forefront. The notion of "readiness to learn" had been endorsed by prominent national groups, chief among these the National Governor's Association (NGA) and the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE).

NGA issued two reports on education reform, *Time For Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education* and *Focus on the First Sixty Months*, both of which call for state investment in preschool programs. NASBE's report, *Right From The Start*, more sweeping in scope, envisioned improving the early grades through establishment of "early childhood units" in public schools. The units would be for children ages four to eight and based upon successful preschool models. The public school units would also have responsibility for developing partnerships between schools and community early childhood programs that serve preschool children and their families.

NASBE's report not only recommended programs for four-year-olds in the public schools; further, it endorsed early childhood education as appropriate pedagogy for the primary grades (K-3) and in doing so, defined the early childhood unit as distinctive from the upper grades. Embracing developmentally appropriate curriculum for the first years of school provided linkage of public schools to the previously autonomous public and private preschool programs in a given community.

The second force affecting the development of early childhood education has been the changing demographics of the work force. It has been well documented that the number of women who have entered the work force has doubled since 1970, which has created a need for more early care and education services. The data show that 57 percent (or about 30 million) of an estimated 53.4 million children under the age of 15 had mothers who were employed in 1988, the last year for which complete statistics are available.

The need for child care is not limited to children whose parents are working. Mothers and fathers who are searching for employment, or are in job-training or educational programs may also require care for their children. Increasingly, welfare reform efforts (for example, *The Family Support Act of 1988*) have also driven low-income and unemployed women into training programs and work and their children into child care (Children's Defense Fund, 1992; Kagan, 1990).

Recent demand for child care touches many different segments of the population. Awareness of child care issues has informed educators and policy makers about the need for early childhood programs. One result has been that states considered (and sometimes acted upon) public school involvement in preschool and school-age child care.

The third force influencing the development of preschool programs was the widely-popularized research that pointed to positive long-term effects of quality early childhood programs. Early intervention for low-income or "at-risk" children has been shown to be effective for future success in school and, indeed, for life. In particular, it is now well known that participation in quality preschool programs can not only reduce the risk of being retained in school but also enhance children's academic performance through high school.

Two studies are particularly noteworthy: one on the Perry Preschool Project conducted by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (Weikart, 1990) the other on New York's Prekindergarten program (University of the State of New York, 1992). These studies are among the few that followed, from preschool, children from low-income families who participated in high-quality, early childhood education.

Evidence from both these studies points out that when poor children are better prepared for school intellectually and socially, they are less likely to need special education classes or to repeat a grade—and that their greater success in school tends to lead to greater success in adolescence and adulthood. Their rates of delinquency, teenage pregnancy, and welfare usage are lower and their rates of high school completion and subsequent employment are higher.

Kagan (1990) suggests that while it is appropriate to provide early intervention services for low-income children, the issue of equality deserves attention. Interest in early childhood intervention led to programs for low income children and although the long-term results are positive, these children became segregated from their more affluent peers.

At risk is the development of a tiered system where poor children attend subsidized programs and middle income children attend fee-for-service programs. As states build early childhood initiatives they must consider issues of equality as they weigh the positive outcomes for the at-risk in state-funded programs.

Key to the success of preschool programs for at-risk children has been the concept of quality. Research has outlined basic components of quality to be tied to: (1) the nature of the relationship between the caregiver and the child, (2) the nature of the environment and (3) the nature of the relationship between the caregiver and parents. Briefly, strong supportive child-adult interactions contribute to children's social and intellectual competence (McCartney, 1984; McCartney, Scarr, Phillips, Grajek & Schwartz, 1982).

Equally important is a planned, sequenced and developmentally appropriate program with a balance of child-initiated and teacher-directed activities to enhance children's learning (Karnes, Schwedel & Williams, 1983; Schweinhart, Weikart & Larner, 1986; Bredekamp, 1987). Environmental factors include more than the physical properties of the setting; important components of quality are group size, ratio of adults to children and stability of caregivers.

In sum, there are clear definitions for determining quality in early childhood programs and the link between quality programs and personal and societal success for low-income children has been defined. It is clear that policy makers must assure a level of quality if the programs are to make a difference.

Three forces, therefore, were influential in the states' decisions to be involved in preschools: education reform at the early childhood level, the demand for early childhood programs (mainly child care) and the role of quality early childhood programs in changing childrens' lives. Each state responded to the forces according to the needs of its population and available resources.

The Maine Context

Not surprisingly, Maine was one of the twenty-eight states that carefully considered and then acted upon a demonstration preschool. Maine had an impressive history of implementing early childhood education programs that have served a wide variety of children and their families. The development of Maine's publicly funded prekindergarten or preschool programs grew out of a substantial framework of policy initiatives both prior to and during the eighties.

Although the eighties were characterized by a tremendous amount of new initiatives in early childhood education, efforts in early childhood education prior to this decade set the stage for the state's early childhood demonstration sites. Some of the existing strengths within the state included a well-established Head Start program, a unique coordination providing services to handicapped children 0-5 years, well-organized associations of both child care

and Head Start directors and a Department of Education that was poised to become involved in early childhood education. Moreover, state systems in early childhood education in Maine communicated on a regular basis. Based upon this framework, the potential for more collaboration among them was readily apparent.

In the 1980s Maine responded to the three forces outlined above with support to build upon successful programs and new initiatives designed to effect coordination of existing programs. Motivated by a continuing dire need for affordable, high quality preschool programs for all children and a need to articulate the transition from preschool to public school, new state efforts were implemented in early childhood programs. The following highlights preexisting strengths and initiatives of the past decade that were part of the evolution of the publicly funded early childhood demonstration sites.

Head Start

In Maine, preschool programs have historically been provided principally by Head Start and by private and publicly funded providers. Maine successfully implemented Head Start and, due to a conscientious effort, by the eighties surpassed many states in the percent of eligible children served (Maine 25%; national 18%).

As part of the Early Childhood component of the *Educational Reform Act of 1984* (Chapter 859, P.L. 1984), the Maine Legislature appropriated $1.7 million for expansion of Head Start Services for fiscal years 1895 and 1986. The amount of supplemental State assistance was increased to $1.9 million in each of fiscal years 1987 and 1988. Even with increased funding for expansion, by the late eighties three-quarters of the children eligible were not being served.

Child Development Services

In addition to well-established services for Head Start, Maine had begun before many other states to design a system to serve young children with special needs or handicapping conditions. Maine's unique comprehensive service delivery system referred to as Child Development Services (CDS), began in 1977 for young children with special needs, and is now a statewide network of sixteen coordination sites (one per county) for children ages birth through age 5. The coordination sites cover over 85% of the geographic area in the State.

The sites represent a major activity component of the State's former Interdepartmental Coordinating Council for Preschool Handicapped Children (ICCPHC). The council consisted of representatives from the Departments of Education, Human Services, Mental Health and Retardation, parents, child advocates, Head Start and child care. The network of coordination sites were recognized as a national model for early intervention services. The coordination sites have provided essential services efficiently to aproximately 5,000

preschoolers annually. CDS has been extremely effective in locating children with special needs and their families. Even so, once identified, finding appropriate services in group programs for 3-5 year olds with special needs is very difficult as space is extremely limited.

Child Care

As with other states, Maine became interested in responding to the child care needs of its working parents. The Maine Child Care Task Force convened in September 1983. Its report, *Child Care in Maine: An Emerging Crisis*, provided recommendations for improvements including child care policies and programs. Key recommendations included the establishment of an Office of Child Care Coordination (OCCC), a statewide Child Care Resource and Referral System and pilot programs in public school, preschool, and school age child care sponsored by the Department of Education (Recommendation 7.a).

Among the early achievements of the OCCC and its advisory committee was the passage of a child care initiative by the Legislature in 1987. A central component of this initiative was the approval of funding in FY 1988 and FY 1989 for the establishment of a system of up to six Regional Child Care Resource Development Centers (RDCS) to provide statewide resource and referral services and encourage child care expansion. During the 1986-87 biennium, the Legislature approved a grant program for start-up funds for school-age child care programs administered by OCCC.

Maine continues to be actively involved in expanding and improving its child care system. Budget requests in 1990-91 sought continued expansion of child care resources.

The Department of Education and Educational Reform

At the same time there was interest in child care and in children with special needs, educators in Maine's public schools began to consider early childhood programs. In the 1980's there was growing interest in education reform and particularly its application to early childhood education.

In 1983 Maine passed legislation to encourage schools to place increased emphasis on curriculum and instruction in the kindergarten and primary level (K-3) and to encourage development of new and expanded programs. This legislation permitted two-year kindergartens although programs for four-year-olds were voluntary for school districts.

In 1985, Maine was one of 28 states (including the District of Columbia) with preschool legislation (Marx and Seligson, 1988). While provision for programs for 4-year-olds was voluntary for school districts, the Education Reform Act of 1984 required that, beginning with the 1985-86 school year, school districts must provide kindergarten for 5-year-old children.

The second State effort in early childhood education was contained in the 1984 Education Reform Act (Chapter 859, P.L. 1984), which was designed to make schools more effective.

Key components for early childhood education in the Act were: funds for an Advisory Committee on Early Education; a kindergarten through grade 3 Early Childhood Education Plan; a Competitive Grants Program; required screening and assessment for kindergarten; a comprehensive kindergarten through grade 3 curriculum; start up costs for establishing the newly mandated kindergarten for 5-year-olds and two staff positions in the Department of Education. All of these components proved critical for increasing interest and understanding of educators and policy makers in early education.

Two items were fundamental to the later development of the early childhood demonstration sites: (1) the Competitive Grants program which later was expanded to fund the demonstration sites; and, (2) the DOE early elementary staff positions (one of which was filled by a person with background in preschool education). The position of Project Director of the demonstration sites evolved from one of the Department of Education staff positions.

By 1988 the focus of reform had expanded to include the early elementary years. The Legislature's Special Commission on School Entrance Age released a report that emphasized the importance of the early elementary years in the development of children. In 1988 this Commission was reconstituted as the Special Commission on Early Childhood Development and Education.

This Commission issued its report in December, 1988 which included specific recommendations designed to encourage and support high quality developmentally appropriate preschool and K-4 programs. Additionally, the Commission outlined several overall goals for early childhood education that it recommended be incorporated in all of Maine's programs involving young children.

Key suggestions included: (1) directing the Department of Education to continue and expand its efforts to encourage appropriate curriculum in the early elementary grades and (2) expansion of Head Start services. More specifically, Recommendation #5 directed the DOE to revise its Early Childhood Education Plan grants program to include proposals that address three new areas: (1) four year olds, including preschool handicapped and "at-risk" children, (2) the transition from preschool to kindergarten, and, (3) the development of parent outreach and support programs.

Further, the Commission outlined as part of the Early Childhood Education Plan grants, regional training/demonstration sites administered by public schools for preschool children starting with four-year-olds. Maine's Governor championed this initiative and placed the necessary funds into the Department of Education budget. The Commission's recommendation resulted in Legislation (Chapter 548, P.L. 1989) that provided the authority to establish the demonstration sites.

In sum, Maine had developed systems for preschoolers through Head Start, Child Care and Child Development Services. The Department of

Education had begun to sponsor early childhood initiatives in the public school. Together these early childhood systems were poised to address new demands for children and their families. Further, as a state with a small population, representatives of the early childhood systems were visible to each other and had served together on a variety of state task forces and committees. Needed was an initiative in early childhood education that required conscientious collaboration of these systems. The Department of Education provided a collaborative project; it was supported by the Legislature and it took the form of demonstration sites for four-year-olds in the public schools.

Demonstration Sites

Purpose

The intent or purpose of the Early Childhood Demonstration Site Grants Program was to designate model early childhood programs within the schools to serve as demonstration and training sites for public school and preschool educators and to increase access to quality programs for young children and their families. The awards were to be for two years, and awarded to School Administrative Units that demonstrated coordination and collaboration with the local Head Start (at a minimum) and other agencies.

The sites were to become self-supporting after the grant period by generating subsidy to the school districts. The scope of program objectives included the following:

1. To provide increased availability of services to a diverse population of four-year-old children, particularly the underserved.
2. To provide quality educational experiences based on designated curriculum and on individualized, integrated, child-centered approaches that lead to improved outcomes for children and families through at least the early elementary grades.
3. To provide for regional training opportunities for early childhood educators (both preschool and early elementary) which result in the adoption of effective practices modeled at the demonstration sites.
4. To provide parental education programs and opportunities for parental involvement which result in changes in parental perspectives on child-rearing and involvement in school through at least the early elementary grades.
5. To enhance and promote collaborative efforts between schools and other agencies and emphasizing the importance of interagency efforts in addressing child and family needs.
6. To participate in evaluation and research efforts that examine strengths of the sites, effectiveness in terms of child and family outcomes and impact on later schooling.

Selection of the Sites

A collaborative process to select sites was initiated by the Department of Education. Persons representing all of the programs involved in early childhood education were invited to develop criteria for sites. The participants

were from Head Start, the public schools, private preschool programs, publicly funded preschool programs, the University of Maine campuses and Department of Education. Once criteria were established (Chapter 175, Rules for Early Childhood Demonstration Site Grants), a request for proposals was sent to all public schools and early childhood programs in the State.

Simultaneously with the development of site proposals, an advisory board, called the Early Childhood Demonstration Sites Advisory Board, was formed to guide the implementation of the project. Members of the Advisory Board were drawn from: Department of Education, State Board of Education, Child Development Services, Maine Elementary Principals Association, Head Start, Child Care and legislators. The Advisory Board was convened in Fall, 1990.

The Sites

Three sites were selected from the competition to develop model early childhood programs. These sites represented geographical diversity ranging from Buckfield and Waterville in Central Maine to Caribou in the far north. The demonstration project chose the sites guided by the idea of "explicit diversity", that is, the different sites would demonstrate three models of the same curricular approach. While Buckfield was a very small rural town with no existing group programs for preschoolers, Caribou and Waterville were large communities offering the community a variety of preschool programs. The Buckfield Site was located in a grange hall and the elementary school was nearby. Caribou's preschool was located in one of its public schools and both shared facilities and resources. The Waterville site was placed in a facility with other publicly funded preschool programs of Head Start and Child Care that served children of low income and at-risk families.

The group size of each site ranged from 16-20 and was well within the guidelines of the State and what is considered high quality practice. Each group included children from all economic groups in the community with an emphasis on the underserved. For each group there were at least two adults not including volunteers or student aides. One head teacher and one assistant teacher was the staffing pattern in two of the sites; in the third two teachers shared the position of head teacher and there was an assistant as well.

Technical expertise was provided for site development by early childhood education experts from outside Maine. High/Scope of Ypsilanti, Michigan, was chosen as a successful model of early childhood education programs and Maine chose to take advantage of both its training program for teachers and its curriculum for children.

Training of Site Personnel

All teachers participated together in a comprehensive training session on High/Scope Curriculum given by High/Scope trainers prior to the beginning of the program. The initial training was for 4 weeks and focussed on developing a high quality early childhood education program. Regular

followup sessions for the teachers with the Project Director occurred throughout the demonstration project.

An important activity of the demonstration sites project was the development of a statewide training network in early childhood education. In the first year, one of the early elementary specialists from the Department of Education became a certified trainer in the High/Scope method. By the end of the third year there were four certified High/Scope Trainers in the State.

Community Resource Teams

The Community Resource Teams were an important part of the project. They had two major roles: (1) proposal development in Year 1; and, (2) selection of site children in Years 2 and 3. In order to fulfill these responsibilities the Teams particpated in two training sessions. The first session was an orientation to the project and was provided by the project director from the Department of Education. The second session was focussed building the Team's ability for its roles and responsibilities in selecting children and working in an advisory capacity to the site.

The Evaluation Study

Methodology

The demonstration sites began in 1989 with the dual purpose of (1) demonstrating high quality programs for underserved four-year-olds and their families and (2) providing training in quality early childhood practices for both preschool and public school educators. There were three years of initial project funding. Year 1 was largely devoted to planning, site selection and staff training; children were enrolled in the preschool sites in Year 2 and Year 3.

In order for policy makers and educators to know if the demonstration sites were effective and were doing what they were designed to do, an evaluation of the sites was proposed. Design of an effective evaluation posed some questions. First, while there is longitudinal information that clearly indicates preschool experience has positive effects through grade 3 and beyond, the early results of this type are difficult to detect at the kindergarten level.

In terms of Maine's demonstration sites, an evaluation that focussed only on long range effects, while valuable, would have been extremely expensive and have taken a long time to complete. In addition, the small number of children in the demonstration sites (49) mitigated against a large scale longitudinal study. Of more immediate value would be an evaluation focussing on the experience of the first two years.

Another area of valuable longitudinal evaluation was seen to be the effects of the demonstration on K-3 educators. In three years preliminary data would be available on K-3 teacher activities, and these could be described in the evaluation as basis for further examination.

Maine's initiative in publicly funded preschool programs responded to these questions on evaluation in two ways. First, a formative evaluation was done of the first year of the implementing of the preschool programs. The focus of the evaluation was the qualitative experience for children, their parents and teachers in the programs. Then in the second year of implementation, information was collected on the efforts to influence public school programs, particularly teachers and curriculum in kindergarten and the early grades.

In addition, parental perspectives on the program experience for the children after kindergarten entrance were a part of the information from the third year of the project.

The Formative Evaluation

Recognizing the need for formative evaluation, the Early Childhood Demonstration Site Advisory Board and the Early Childhood faculty of the University of Maine at Farmington agreed in January 1991 to undertake a review of the sites' operations, examining specifically the experience of children, teachers and parents.

The goal of the evaluation project was twofold: (1) to provide a formative assessment of the sites' programs, with particular attention to the experiences of children, teachers and parents and (2) to recommend to the Early Childhood Demonstration Sites Advisory Board procedures which would enhance review and assessment of the programs.

The formative evaluation was innovative in its method. The plan was timely in that it responded to professional ideas of "meaningful inquiry". One of the characteristics of the formative evaluation was to develop an evaluation protocol grounded in qualitative methods to go "...well beyond the concern of whether a particular set of objectives are achieved or whether a particular set of criteria are met...(with), instead an emphasis on how various aspects of that which is being evaluated (event, program, teacher performance, environment, etc.) are related to variations in outcomes for participants. The purpose of evaluation research is to construct a better understanding of the forces that interplay within a given situation" (Dopyera and Lay-Dopyera, 1990).

The development of such a form of inquiry is a cutting-edge practice in early childhood education and this approach was adopted and implemented for Maine's project.

The evaluation was unique for two other reasons: (1) it involved collaboration of state agencies, professional organizations and the university and (2) principal investigators included preservice professionals, that is, majors in early childhood education who participated in the study design, data collection and data analysis. There were multiple types of data collection, each designed to uncover the perspective and experience of the different participants. Data collection for the children's experience included a full day of observation of each child and an instrument to rate that quality of the environment (*Early Childhood Environmental Inventory*, Harms and Clifford, 1980).

The day-long observation was done using running records. In these the observer records everything a child does and says from arrival to departure. The observational record or "log" was for a period of approximately three hours or 180 minutes per child. A total of 49 children were observed. The ECERS is a measure of program quality and consists of seven scales: (1) Personal Care, (2) Furnishings/Display, (3) Language/Reasoning, (4) Fine/Gross Motor, (5) Creative Activities, (6) Social Development and (7) Adult Needs. This instrument has been widely used in the early childhood field for determining the quality of preschool programs.

The teachers' experiences were captured using two approaches. Each teacher and assistant teacher were observed for an entire day and their behavior was recorded using running records. Each teacher was interviewed using a semi-structured interview that focussed on the teachers' perspective on curriculum, on working with children and the parents.

Parental experience was gleaned by three types of data collection. First, the teachers of each site named three "most" and "least" involved parents. A semi-structured interview protocol that was designed and tested prior to data collection was used by the researchers in a parent interview in a place of the parents choosing. Most interviews occurred in the child's home. Questions focussed on the nature of the parents' involvement, barriers to involvement and perspectives on the child's experience in the program.

Second, each teacher was interviewed using a semi-structured interview that focussed specifically on the nature of parental involvement during the year.

Third, an environmental inventory of the classroom and the teachers' files on parental information was done to uncover the visual nature of parental activity in the classroom. This environmental inventory included noting the presence of newsletters to parents and a brief analysis of their contents.

Data Collection

To understand the third purpose of the project—that is, its impact on professionals in the community preschools and K-3 teachers of the demonstration communities—data were collected throughout the project. This data collection began in the first year and continued through the duration of the first three years of the project. Data included number of children served and numbers of teachers in both preschool and the early grades participating in training sessions, collected by attendance records in the sites.

In order to collect information on the beginning effects of preschool, two follow-up questionnaires were sent to parents. The parent questionnaire yielded information from two cycles of children in the demonstration sites. These groups were from Year 2 (1990-91) and Year 3 (1991-92). One of the questionnaires asked for parental input about their child's prekindergarten experience and the other asked about their child's continuing experience in kindergarten. Parents in the first cycle completed the two questionnaires.

Data Analysis

Briefly, the analysis of the formative data examined information from the observations, interviews and environmental rating scale and focussed on the findings' relevance to quality early childhood education practice, especially active learning, child-initiated interaction, parent involvement and teacher behavior. The evaluation did not assess High/Scope per se, but did look carefully at the "Plan-Do-Review" protocol as a hallmark of the High/Scope curriculum.

Analysis

The results of the two follow-up questionnaires to parents were analyzed according to issues of the child's adjustment to public school, attitudes toward schooling and parents' perspective on involvement. Descriptive statistics are used in presenting the results.

An incomplete response to the follow-up questionnaires from the second cycle of families enrolled in 1991-92 resulted in dropping this information from this summary. Instead, the results of the two questionnaires completed by parents in the first cycle are presented.

The results of both the evaluations are presented in this report in a depersonnalized manner—that is, sites are identified by their number and not by name.

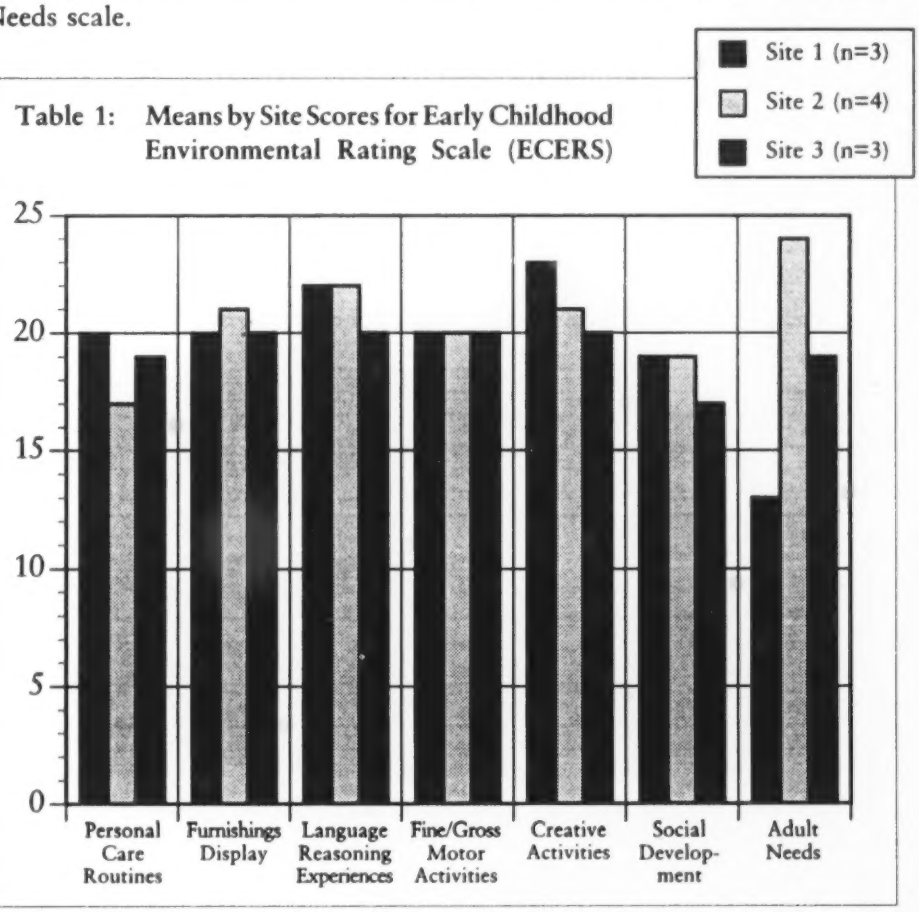
Findings

The Environment

One question posed in the evaluation was: "Were the demonstration sites of comparable quality with other preschool programs?" The ratings on the ECERS revealed that all three sites were of high quality on almost all of the Scales (see Table 1). There was a small amount of divergence between sites in the average ratings of all seven scales.

The specific scales where one site was lower or higher than the others were: Personal Care, Language/Reasoning, Creative Activities, Social Development, and Adult Needs. The most difference was noted in the Adult Needs scale.

Table 1: Means by Site Scores for Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS)



Observer ratings may have varied with the dramatically different physical environments of the programs. Site #1 was located in a public grange hall, which consisted of one large room converted for use with young children. Space for adults was understandably not easy to address. The site received a lower rating than the other sites.

Site #2 on the other hand, was housed in rooms designed for adults to work with young children and there was ample provision for adult personal belongings and space for teachers and parents to meet and relax. Site #2 received the highest rating in the Adult Needs scale.

The Social Development Scale received the lower ratings for all scales in all sites. This score is an average of several items. An examination of the items in the Social Development scale indicated lower average ratings for the provision of space to be alone, materials for promoting cultural awareness and provision for exceptional children. Since the average score was used, it is important to note that while all sites were identical on the first two items, one did receive a higher rating on the third, provision for exceptional children. However, this site's rating for the first two items were lower; therefore, its overall rating in Social Development can be attributed to the first two items only.

The Children

The observational logs of a child's day were the major source of information about childrens' experience in the programs. Analysis of these focussed on child-initiated activities and interactions with others, both adults and children. Sites were compared on children's work time by area and the amount of time (in minutes) spent in the areas. Childrens' initiations to and from others were also compared in the sites (see Tables 2 and 3, next page).

In addition, the results of sites were combined to obtain a group profile on child-initiated work. Descriptive statistics were used to present the data.

Turning first to the childrens' choice of work areas, some similarities and differences between sites emerge. All work areas that were available were utilized by children in all sites; indicating the children made use of the total environment (see Table 2). The areas receiving the most use were Blocks (24.71%), Art (24.14%), and Housekeeping (17.73%). Those receiving the least use were Science, Water and Large Motor.

It is notable that Science is the only area that was available in each site on a continuing basis. The other two areas of low use were not always available to children. For example, if the site had only one "table" or container for sand or water, one material but not both was available on a given day. Even so, the Sand and Water areas were not heavily populated in all sites.

There was some variation among sites in the time children spent in the chosen areas. In one site, considerably longer time was spent on the average in one work area, indicating children worked longer in all areas.

Table 2: Children's Work Time Choices by Area and Time Spent (in Minutes)

	Site #1 (n=19)		Site #2 (n=15)		Site #3 (n=15)	
Location	Children	Time	Children	Time	Children	Time
Art	11	152	9	216	7	144
Blocks	14	384	4	6	66	74
Housekeeping	12	146	4	122	6	108
Large Motor			3	80		
Manipulative	2	11			7	152
Quiet	7	52	1	30	5	54
Sand Table	1	10	2	60	6	103
Science	2	10			3	54
Water Table	7	93				
Totals	56	858	23	574	40	689
Average Work Time per Site	1	45	1	38	1	45
Average Time Per Child (in minutes)		15.32		24.96		17.22

This was perhaps explained as a result of policy that a child had to ask to change areas. In the other two sites, the children were free to move about when they wanted without seeking permission. Even so, the average time spent in all sites in free play was fifteen minutes or longer, a lengthy work period. The average work period for the sites ranged from 38-45 minutes, indicative of a good amount of time devoted to child-initiated work.

Given an environment peopled with agemates and enough teachers "to go around," how did children make use of the social situation? Childrens' social interactions with peers, adults and teachers were tallied for the day of observation and averaged by site, and then an average was computed for all sites (see Tables 4 and 5).

In each site the greatest number of social interactions were among children. Site #3 had more peer interactions on the average than the other two. A similar pattern emerged in teacher-initiated interactions with children.

Table 3: Total Combined Percentage of Work Time Choices—All Sites

Locations	# Children	Time Spent	Percentage
Art	27	512	24.14
Blocks	24	524	24.71
Housekeeping	22	376	17.73
Large Motor	3	80	3.77
Manipulative	9	163	7.68
Quiet	13	136	6.41
Sand Table	9	173	8.16
Science	5	64	3.02
Water Table	7	93	4.38
Totals	119	2121	100.00

Table 4: Number of Initiated Interactions by Site

Interaction	Site #1	Site #2	Site 3
Child/child	157	145	197
Child/teacher	101	104	93
Teacher/child	145	119	143
Totals	403	368	433

Table 5: Number of Combined Initiative Interactions—All Sites

Initiations	Total Interactions	Percentage
Child/child	499	41.45
Child/teacher	298	24.75
Teacher/child	407	33.80
Totals	1204	100.00

In two sites the average number of teacher-child interactions was approximately the same, (7.63 and 7.93) yet in Site #3 the average was higher (9.53). In Site #3 therefore, the average number of interactions among children and between children and teachers was higher than the other two sites.

As a group the sites' profile that emerged was one of children interacting considerably with their peers and their teachers. Children initiated more on the average to their peers and teachers initiated a good amount to the children. Taking all interactions with adults together, children received and gave considerable attention to their teachers (58% of the total interactions).

In addition to the child logs, data on children's experiences in subsequent schooling were also collected over a two-year period, from the beginning of the project. The follow-up data was collected on the children who participated in the programs as they entered public school kindergartens by the sites' teachers.

The short term data on the transition of children to public school include information on grade retention and referrals to special education or Chapter 1. It is important to emphasize that the follow-up is of a very limited duration and that any potential effects of the preschool experience may not be discernible.

Two groups of children were considered in examining continuing school experience for the preschool children: (1) those enrolled in the the demonstration site during 1990-91; and, (2) all other children entering kindergarten. While the children who did not participate in the demonstration sites might have participated in some other preschool experience, this was not considered in the collecting of information.

In terms of total numbers in kindergarten, the preschoolers in the demonstration sites totalled 49 and they ranged from 8.6% to 31.7% of those entering kindergarten in a given community. Where numbers were available, the children involved in the demonstration sites had a proportionately lower rate of referrals for Special Education and/or Chapter 1 services. Again, this represents very preliminary data on their later performance as it is only after the first year of formal schooling.

Results: The Teachers

How did teachers teach in the early childhood demonstration sites? The data from interviews with teachers and from daily observations were considered. Interview data were analyzed for themes on teacher perspectives on curriculum in an early childhood program. Observation provided insights on how teachers behave in a classroom particularly where there is child-initiated work and a group of four-year-olds.

The daily logs contained rich information on teacher behavior. Teacher pathways or locations in the classroom during child-initiated times were tallied for the amount of work areas teachers visited. The areas most visited were noted for each teacher observed and averaged.

Results indicated that teachers, both head teachers and assistants, moved frequently, approximately twelve times on the average during the work period. The area most visited by teachers was the dramatic play or housekeeping area.

In addition, the type of activities of teachers were noted. Teacher roles were identified across sites during the entire day and included: group leader, giver of information, playmate, repair person, preparer/server of food, telephone answerer (or intercom) and confidant, to name a few. Further, roles often converged with a teacher performing two at once. For example, she might have "played the visitor" in housekeeping and at the same time looked over to the art area and complimented a child on a painting.

As a leader of the group, the teacher led the children in planning their first activities in the work period, a major part of High/Scope's "Plan-Do-Review". In this role teacher behavior was characterized as oriented to the individual child. The teachers addressed each child individually and guided their planning and reporting of the work time.

Data from the observations of teachers' days indicated the qualitative nature of teacher-child interactions. Prevalent adult behaviors were the following: teachers used soft, effective voices, facial expressions of the teachers indicated interest in children, teachers used eye contact and bent over and spoke with children at the child's level and teachers addressed the children by name.

In addition, teachers went beyond verbal interaction and were observed displaying communication of an affective nature. This occurred more during group or circle time than at other times during the day. Examples of physical interaction included: offering children a lap to sit on and responding to or giving hugs to children. In terms of verbal interaction or language exchanges, teachers were noted to restate the children's comments in their conversations.

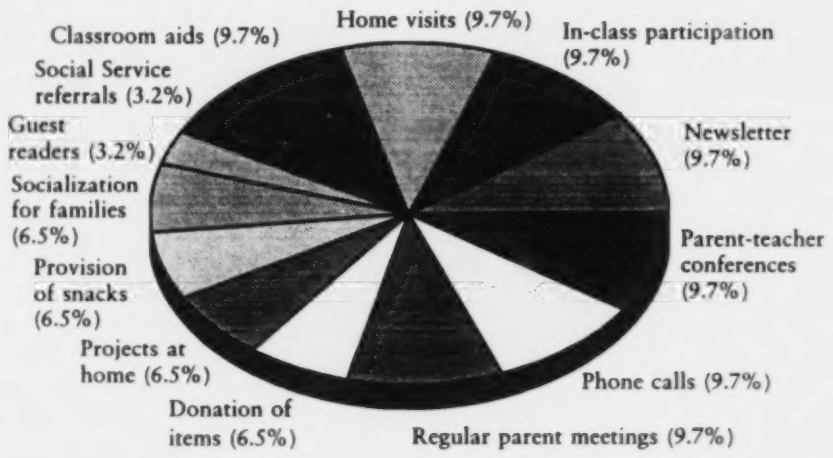
In terms of the quality of children and teachers' initiations, there appeared to have been numerous, personal, child-oriented interactions where teachers used more than one type of interactional style. Further, the teachers provided important language experiences by repeating words for understanding and these exchanges were embedded in the ongoing verbal interactions.

Results: The Parents

How were parents involved in the programs? How did they perceive the value of the program in their child's educational experience? How did the teachers encourage parental involvement?

Interviews with seven teachers and teacher aides in the three demonstration sites indicated support for and concerns about parents' role in the public schools. All voiced commitment to the importance of parental involvement in their children's education and designed pilot efforts to strengthen such involvement. The 3 sites reported a total of 13 kinds of parent involvement (see Table 6).

Table 6: Types of Parent Contacts as Reported by Teachers (n=3)



Note: Percentages were calculated with the sum total of all contacts equal to 100%

As Table 6 shows, the 3 sites fostered parental involvement features typical of both preschool (e.g., home visits and newsletters) and traditional public school settings (e.g., parent conferences and phone calls), reflecting the hybrid nature of the demonstration programs. Teachers were supported in such a relatively ambitious effort by work schedules which employed them half-day in the classroom and allotted the remaining half-day to program planning and parent contact.

Like many preschool programs, these sites concerned themselves with parent education. However, many of their activities had a focus particular to their hybrid nature: educating parents about the designated program model (High/Scope). Because these were public school programs, teachers felt parents' expectations might be more traditional; "formal" and "educational".

The use of a child-focussed curriculum needed frequent interpretation. Teachers used parent meetings, workshops and newsletters to interpret the program to parents. Further, all sites transferred information to parents in the classroom environment using photos and explanations of children's work, interpretations of work materials, the daily schedule and informational materials on children learning from High/Scope to educate parents.

Nonetheless, all teachers expressed concern about the pressure from parents that the program be "academic" enough. In this context, the need for parent education is particularly acute.

The demonstration site teachers shared other parental involvement concerns familiar to both preschool and public school teachers; drawing in and encouraging less involved parents, devising activities which overcame

work schedule impediments and educating parents about child development. They found that effective responses to these concerns were home visits, a regular schedule of daily parent volunteers, reaching out with a specific request for help and asking parents to provide snacks. All sites, however, felt the need to become more systematic and attentive to record keeping in developing these efforts in subsequent years.

In assessing the first year of operation as publicly funded preschools, the 3 sites undertook an ambitious effort to design parent involvement programs. Their chosen design reflects elements of both preschool and public school practice, thus underscoring their unique nature. Their initial experience warns us that reconciling parent expectations of public schools with developmentally appropriate programs for 4-year-olds may be a significant task (Beach & Squibb, 1992).

The Parents' Perspective

Interviews of eighteen parents in the 3 sites acknowledged the importance of being involved in their child's program. When asked why be involved, several reasons were mentioned; to build a close relationship between parent and teacher, to keep up with the child's learning, to support their child in new experiences and to be able to share experiences with their child. Parents in these programs considered themselves "partners" in the child's learning. They perceived teachers as having something new and important to offer their child, but this did not diminish the parental role.

Parents also felt their role was to be informed about what the teacher provided, be available to their child in the school process and to make sure a chasm did not develop between the child's learning at school and in the home. Overall, parents emphasized that they needed to support their child's individual needs in the educational process of going to school.

The most valuable type of parental involvement according to the parents was as classroom helper. The amount of time parents were in the classroom varied by site. Most parents were in the classroom monthly, some bimonthly, some weekly and two were in the classroom on a daily basis (one was a teacher and one a long-term substitute). The parent interview data indicated that time was a major factor in all parents ability to be in the classroom. Most would choose to be in the classroom more if they had time.

When asked to describe optimal involvement, parents indicated preference as helpers in the classroom, and of next importance were home visits and regular parent-teacher communication. The most valued form of written communication was the newsletter, which served to inform parents about program activities. One of the least involved parents indicated that home visits convinced her that parental ideas were valuable to teachers.

The option of deciding how to be involved appealed to all of the parents interviewed. One parent called the demonstration sites approach to parents "options and opportunities" for involvement and all said it allowed them to

"do what they could". This idea is best summed up in the words of a parent "Education is number one in any child's life. Some (parents) can do more than others, but all should do what they can."

In terms of factors influencing the amount of involvement, the least involved parents cited work and family concerns that prevented their involvement. Family concerns included sick children or younger children at home to care for. All parents expressed a willingness to do more.

Both the most and least involved parents interviewed had opinions about what their children could gain from the program. Two categories of program strengths were evident: social and cognitive gains for children. Parents cited opportunities in the programs for social learning: learning to get along, to share, building a relationship with a teacher and mingling with children of different family backgrounds.

Overwhelmingly, all parents valued the social aspects of the preschool experience. In the words of one: "It can only be a benefit for children to be around other children their age. In a rural area any exposure is an advantage."

Parents were equally enthusiastic about their child's learning in the programs. Many mentioned opportunities to increase cognitive skills and knowledge. Some of the cognitive aspects of the programs that parents valued were: exposure to the school environment, opportunity to develop thinking and reasoning and to learn how to direct one's own learning. One parent mentioned that the program had "inspired creativity" in her son.

The most involved parents all mentioned the importance of cognitive gains. The least involved parents all mentioned the value of social gains and spoke only generally about the program's academic opportunities citing its value as "school preparation."

While there was some differing emphasis on parental views on what was valuable between most and least involved parents, all valued the program as a preschool experience that provided a range of learning experiences for their children. The parents of the children indicated in a follow-up questionnaire that the preschool experience was valuable for two reasons: (1) the child's adjustment to kindergarten; and, (2) the child's attitude toward schooling.

The Sites As Demonstration

Data were collected on the activities of the sites in their demonstration capacity, including training and awareness sessions for local professionals. The experience of K-3 teachers and other preschool teachers has bearing upon the school experience of both preschool site children and other children who did not have the preschool experience. Since the sites were for demonstration purposes, they had responsibility for providing information on and modelling practices to area educators.

Demonstration activities occurred throughout a three year period. Overall, three major types of demonstrations occurred: (1) visitors were able to view practice teaching; (2) educators in the area could attend awareness

sessions where discussion focussed on the High/Scope method; and. (3) educators could participate in intensive training in the High/Scope method.

Over 170 persons accessed some form of awareness/intensive training over the three year period. In the first year a total of 20 educators participated in four weeks of comprehensive training in the High/Scope Method. They received follow-up training in Years 2 and 3 with at least one intensive session at each site for a total of thirty days (the initial twenty plus five days per year in the two subsequent years).

In each site, all of the kindergarten teachers and many of the first grade teachers participated in training, resulting in the beginning of a "seamless" transition for the children.

Awareness sessions were available to educators and the community at large in each site. In the second year approximately 151 persons attended these sessions. In addition to the awareness/training session, demonstration activities included: collaboration and consultation with area professionals, referrals to and from the preschool programs that involved visitation by other professionals and parents, visitors and workshops.

There were many visitors to the site. Visitors included public school administrators and teachers, high school students and university majors in teacher education, university faculty, Department of Education personnel and community members. Approximately 57 people visited the sites in the 1990-91 year. Other demonstration activities in the same year (# persons involved) were: workshops (20) at the sites; collaboration/consultation with other professionals (27); and referrals of children to the program by community professionals (8).

In sum, activity as a demonstration site with involvement of many professionals and educators as visitors and trainees was substantial. In sum, the demonstration sites provided quality educational experiences to children and their families, regional training opportunities for numerous preschool and public school educators and parental opportunities for involvement in school. They had, in effect accomplished what they had set out to do.

Implications

Investing in early childhood programs has been shown to be an important step towards improving the quality of life for disadvantaged children, their families and for society at large (Weikart, 1990). In order for people to gain from the early childhood efforts a number of issues need to be addressed. Among the issues are: funding the programs, maintaining high quality, fragmentation of other early childhood programs, equality of participation, and the relationship of these programs to state and national educational goals.

The Maine experience in demonstration sites has implications for other state efforts in early childhood education. Having grappled successfully with many of the major issues outlined above, Maine has contributed to policy makers and public school educators' understanding about the nature of quality programs for four-year-olds.

Maine has also demonstrated a successful systemic approach to the national goal of "readiness to learn". The three models of demonstration provide needed variation for addressing issues of funding and equity in public early education.

Maine's Contribution to Understanding Four-Year-Old Programs

While general acceptance of the notion of developmentally appropriate curriculum for early childhood education programs appears widespread, what makes for a high quality experience remains elusive to many educators and policy makers. For example, the developmentally appropriate approach emphasizes "hands on" learning where children manipulate learning materials in place of doing abstract paper and pencil tasks.

Further, in a quality approach in early education, children have flexibility to choose their work area and pace themselves for a given project. This child-focused approach enhances the learning of concepts as well as the habits and attitudes necessary to do schoolwork.

Yet this approach is foreign to many public school educators. For one, the work looks like and is even called "play". Kagan (1990) suggests that despite potent research findings and documented practices, teachers throughout the country report having difficulty implementing high quality developmentally appropriate programs. External pressures of parents and selected school policies appear to work against providing what is optimal in the early childhood programs.

A second external pressure comes from legislators even more uninformed about optimal practice. Will policy makers really support 'play' with tax dollars? Only if the public can be convinced of its value.

The Maine project was helpful because it provided tangible details on the nature of the developmentally appropriate experience for children, teachers, and their parents. As shown in the evaluation, children's learning in the sites was characterized by numerous experiences with materials traditional to high quality early childhood programs, ample time to explore these materials and by conversations and cooperation with agemates. Teacher-child relationships involved numerous interactions that were individualized and focussed on the child acquiring the skills and attitudes required for subsequent schooling.

Demonstration sites have tremendous value in providing concrete examples of practice. These sites were no exception. They were a focal point for educators to observe and learn about developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood education. Further, this type of teaching and learning was documented in a qualitative manner in the evaluation; thereby offering additional information of a written nature to educate policy makers.

The sites were valuable for providing information about parental involvement in early childhood programs. As a result of the Maine project, more details are available on parental ideas about being involved in their children's learning. The New York longitudinal study (1982) findings indicated the more time parents were involved in the program (and particularly those with less education) the higher the child's scores on three cognitive measures.

In the Maine study, parents echoed this finding in their desire to be involved; better, they indicated specific ways they would like to participate. For example, Maine parents saw time in the classroom as optimal and they also appreciated newsletters and home visits. Further, the least involved parents indicated that they participated less largely due to family constraints and work.

The positive results of parent involvement in previous studies coupled with the information on how to involve parents in the present study have at least two policy implications. First, parent involvement should be a fundamental component of all early childhood programs (extending up through grade 3). Second, parent involvement should include a range of possibilities; minimally time in the classroom for all parents and optimally classroom participation for parents in addition to their receiving various regular communication through home visits and newsletters.

While these approaches are traditional in high quality preschools, they are not common to public schools. Since participation of all parents is critical, policies may need restructuring in schools and in the parents' workplace to eliminate barriers to participation.

The demonstration sites were also a good "test" for the potential of public schools to deliver preschool programs.

It should be noted that the three demonstration sites were not the only Maine efforts with public school programs for four-year-olds. They were, however, the most comprehensive in terms of teacher training, parental involvement, collaboration with community early childhood programs, and participation in evaluation.

The demonstration sites were found to be of high quality as rated by a widely used instrument in the field. Previous criticism by educators on the national scene was that public dollars would only be allotted for the "average" early childhood programs (Weikart, 1990). Since successful outcomes for children have been tied to quality programs, the issue of how much is "good enough" is critical. These Maine sites have demonstrated that high quality is possible in programs sponsored by the public schools, even in a poor, rural state.

Readiness to Learn

The demonstration sites have also provided one state's response to the national goal of "readiness to learn". The preschool programs are one important component of preparing children for school.

Maine has defined their Goal One of the national goals broadly to be that Maine's families, communities, and schools will support children in their learning. The attainment of the Maine goal requires strong cooperation among health, social services, education and business sectors.

The demonstration sites are an example of a beginning of a systemic solution to four-year-old programming. Pivotal to the development of policy for the systemic approach was evidence presented in the early report of the Special Commission on Early Education and Care. A vision of a quality system in which all the independent early childhood programs might share a common philosophy and goals was defined in this document and served as guidepost in the project. One major component to a systemic approach, therefore, is a shared vision articulated by a policy group.

Once the plan was articulated, the next step was assembling the potential partners, in this case those in the education sector. The demonstration sites began with collaboration with Head Start, the major publicly funded preschool program.

Increased funding for Head Start in Maine during the 1980s increased the number of disadvantaged children who had the opportunity for a preschool program. Even so, not all children eligible were being served. It had become evident that Head Start alone may not be able to reach all children. In collaboration with Head Start, public schools have continued to fill the gap on underserved children.

Sites #1 and #2 provided excellent examples of the teaming of Head Start and the public school to meet one community's need in early childhood education. In Year 3, parents eligible for Head Start were given a choice of two programs for their child, Head Start or the Public School program. In

these communities the demonstration site added space and options for disadvantaged children and their parents.

The issue of equality has been discussed by Weikart (1990) and Kagan (1990). If disadvantaged children are best served by quality early childhood programs yet middle class children do not "need" said programs, the appropriateness of only serving the "at risk" becomes questionable. Proceeding in this manner involves less public dollars. However, in doing so, the state supports establishment of a two-tiered system where poor children are in subsidized programs and wealthier children enroll in fee-for-service programs. The end result is segregation at the early levels of schooling.

Maine's effort was from the beginning an attempt to offer preschool equally to a microcosm of the community. Within project regulations it was possible to skew the enrolled families in any one site toward the underserved in the community but all types of families were represented in the site. In Site #1, for example, lacking any preschool program, the community team determined that children from all types of families be enrolled proportionately, resulting in a preschool group of enrolled families that was representative of community income groups.

In preceding thus, Maine has led the way in defining public preschool for all in the community with the stipulation that the Site collaborate with Head Start and prioritize underserved children.

Educational Change for Early Education: The Early Childhood Unit

The Maine experience has demonstrated potential organization of an early childhood unit. NASBE's *Right From The Start* defined the early childhood unit to include four-year-old programs, adoption of a developmentally appropriate pedagogy by preschool, kindergarten, and primary grade teachers, and partnerships with non-public school preschools.

In Maine, partnerships were involved from the beginning with public school and non-public schools represented on the Community Resource Teams. During the project's first three years other types of coordination occurred regularly, among these referrals of children, visits, and participation in awareness sessions and intensive training.

On a statewide level there was coordination of segments of the early childhood community in two activities: (1) the planning of rules or criteria for the sites; and, (2) the advisory board. Included in both were members of Head Start, Child Care, Child Development Services, the University System, Department of Education, State Board of Education and the Legislature.

There were however, lessons to be learned from the collaboration. Given that fiscal authority went from the Department of Education to the School Administrative District, the real "authority" of the community teams was potentially undermined. One recommendation for replication projects is that Community Resource Teams and Advisory Board have more of a policy making role with respect to curriculum, staffing, and training activities.

Turning to the issue of continuity within the public schools, the capacity of the sites to serve as demonstration and training centers was notable. Teachers in the primary grades, kindergarten and preschool participated in training that emphasized key elements to high quality programs. In particular, the teachers received information in areas of planning learning environments, observing children's behavior, and parent involvement.

In the New York study, positive effects of the staff development component increased continuity of children's successful outcomes. While it is too soon to tell what the effects for Maine children will be, it is clear that teachers responded to the training positively and in great numbers. The result is a common core of training for many teachers in early childhood programs through the early grades and this was a substantial achievement within three years.

The policy implication from the New York study and the NASBE report is that common training in developmentally appropriate curriculum be required for establishing quality programs for children. Maine has demonstrated that delivering training is possible and also that training together was a positive experience for educators in the three communities.

The experience of the sites also has implications for the next steps in supporting children and their families. These sites could be expanded to involve more than the education sector—for example, health and social services. The idea of the comprehensive community early childhood center has been described in the literature by others to include a place centralized for broad service delivery for children and families.

Rather than just include half-day programming for four-year-olds, it might also have longer hours of child care services and include younger and older children. More extensive programs and services provided by merging a variety of agencies in a common location appears to be fundamental to achieving Maine's Goal One.

Summary

The Maine early childhood demonstration sites have contributed to the body of information on public preschools. The outcomes of the project evaluation include fine details on the nature of quality developmentally appropriate programming for four-year-olds in preschool efforts. This information is critical for making educators and policy makers aware of the daily reality of the experience for children, parents and the teachers.

Also documented is an innovative systemic approach to early childhood education that provided solutions for issues of equal access and underserved children in the community, for variation in models of delivery, parent involvement in schools, and a beginning definition of the public school early childhood unit. The Maine project is a substantial step towards meeting national goals for an educated citizenry.

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Colophon

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Affirmative Action Officer
Maine Department of Education
State House Station 23
Augusta, Maine 04333-0023
Phone: 207/287-4482
Fax: 207/287-5900